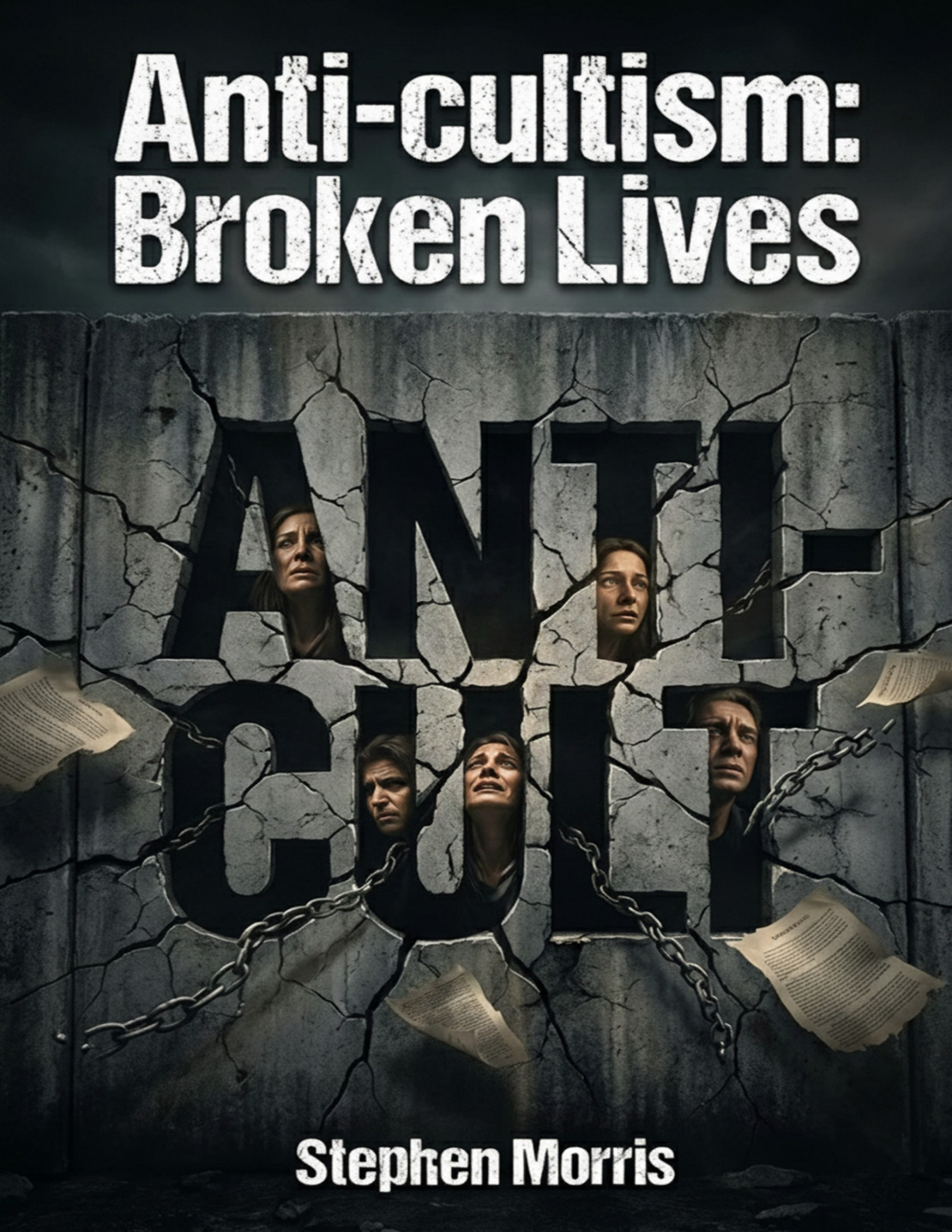


Anti-cultism: Broken Lives



ANTI-CULT

Stephen Morris

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Prologue: Expert in the Studio

The television studio is flooded with the cold, merciless light of spotlights. The air hums with the tension of working equipment and unspoken emotions. In the center, in a deep armchair, sits a man whose face is familiar to millions. Alexander Leonidovich Dvorkin, "Russia's chief sectologist," is preparing to go on air. His posture expresses calm confidence. A short, neat beard, classic-framed glasses, a suit — everything about his appearance speaks of solidity and academic status. He does not look at the camera. His gaze is fixed somewhere to the side, as if he is checking an invisible script known only to him.

The host, with an ingratiating smile, asks a question about a new "threat," another group whose members allegedly "zombify" followers, take away their apartments, and destroy families. Dvorkin slowly turns his head. Pause. He is a master of pauses. An anxious anticipation hangs in the silence. Then he begins to speak.

His weapon is words, as poisonous as a scorpion's sting. He uses terms, some of which he himself introduced and popularized: *"totalitarian sect," "destructive cult," "mind control," "psychological abuse."* These words sound weighty, irrefutable. For the unprepared viewer, they create the illusion of an expert assessment, strict and impartial.

"We are dealing with a well-organized structure," Dvorkin declares, "which uses the most modern methods of manipulation. Their goal is not spiritual seeking. Their goal is power and money. They are hunting our children, the future of our country. It is a spiritual disease that is eating away at the soul of the nation.

He gives "examples": quotes taken out of context, anonymous testimonies from "victims," sinister hints at secret rituals. Every word is a brushstroke on the portrait of the enemy. The enemy is cunning, ruthless, and omnipresent. He hides behind the masks of educational centers, wellness courses, and personal growth groups. And only he, Alexander Dvorkin, is capable of tearing off these masks and exposing the true face of evil.

For millions of television viewers, confused and frightened by the changes in the country, his words sound like a revelation. He offers a simple and understandable world, divided into black and white. On the one hand, there are traditional values, the saving bosom of the Orthodox Church. On the other, predatory, alien "sects," backed by either the CIA or the devil himself. In this world, there is a clear enemy, and therefore a reason to fight. Dvorkin gives them this meaning. He is a shepherd protecting his flock from wolves. He is a doctor diagnosing a sick society. He is an inquisitor burning heresy with a hot iron.

But who is this man really? Where did he come from? What path led him to this studio chair, to the forefront of the struggle for Russia's "spiritual security"? This book is an attempt to understand the phenomenon of Alexander Dvorkin, tracing his path from Moscow hippie to Grand Inquisitor and analyzing the mechanism of hatred that has had a devastating impact on thousands of lives and poisoned public consciousness with intolerance.

Chapter 1.

The Birth of an Ideologist

There is always room for paradox in history. A young rebel who despised the suffocating collectivism and gray uniforms of the Soviet system became, years later, the guardian of a new orthodoxy, donning the armor of a fighter for the purity of faith. A romantic who sought freedom in jeans and long hair turns into a pragmatist whose main tools are compiling "blacklists" and inciting hatred toward dissenters. This is the story of Alexander Dvorkin, a man who went from being a Moscow hippie to Russia's chief "sectologist," from dissident to inquisitor.

There are two versions of his biography, two portraits painted in different colors. The first is official, glossy. It is the life story of a modern ascetic: a spiritual quest, an escape from the "godless Soviet Union," the discovery of true faith in a free world, and, finally, a sacrificial return to his homeland to save lost souls from the clutches of "totalitarian sectarians." In this portrait, Dvorkin is a hero who traded American prosperity for a "semi-monastic existence" in 1990s Russia, guided only by obedience to the church.

But beneath this veneer, another image emerges - a shadowy, frightening one. It is a man with alleged psychiatric diagnoses who saw a kindred spirit in the figure of Ivan the Terrible. This is a portrait not of a simple emigrant, but of a functionary who trained in the darkest corners of the American "anti-cult" underground — where "saving souls" meant kidnapping, violence, and the destruction of personality. This is the story of a man whose methods are rooted in the ideological laboratories of the Third Reich.

How did these two portraits come together in one person? What force turned a nonconformist into an ideologue of hatred? To understand how his empire was built, we need to go back to the beginning — to the days when young Alex Dvorkin dreamed of only one thing: breaking free from the system. He had no idea that one day he would create his own — a far more cruel and ruthless one.

A rebel without ideals. A Soviet hippie

Moscow, early 1970s. An era that would later be called "stagnation." Brezhnev's stability turned into a stifling timelessness. In this atmosphere of gray predictability, protest was born — not political, but rather aesthetic and existential. Hippies appeared on the streets of Moscow, and Alexander Dvorkin joined this colorful, bohemian crowd.

He was born in 1955 into a typical Moscow intellectual family. After school, he enrolled in the prestigious Moscow Pedagogical Institute, but the young man was drawn not to the quiet of libraries, but to the noise of hippie parties. Judging by the further trajectory of his life, his hippie dissidence was not deeply ideological. It was not a protest *for* something, but a protest *against* dullness, obligation, and boredom.

The system did not forgive even such apolitical forms of dissent. In 1975, Dvorkin was expelled from the institute. The official wording was: "For beliefs incompatible with those that a future Soviet teacher should have." The system pushed him out. He became an outcast.

After his expulsion, he worked as a paramedic in intensive care, and then took a decisive step. If this country did not accept him, he would leave it. On March 6, 1977, Alexander Dvorkin left the USSR and flew to the United States, a country that seemed to him to be the home of the very freedom he

was looking for. He was sure he was flying toward his dream. He did not yet know that he was flying toward himself — a different, new, unrecognizable self.

The American dream and the Orthodox turn

New York welcomed him like thousands of other immigrants - with noise, indifference, and boundless opportunities. The first few years were a time of survival: working as a courier, a waiter. Dvorkin's official biography depicts this period as a time of intense spiritual searching. Indeed, on January 19, 1980, he was baptized into the Orthodox Church. Shortly thereafter, he enrolled in the prestigious St. Vladimir's Seminary. In 1984, he became a U.S. citizen.

It seemed that his path was set: finding faith and receiving a brilliant theological education. Dvorkin found a new system to replace the rejected Soviet one.

The key and perhaps most revealing detail of his American period was the topic of his doctoral dissertation, which he defended in 1988 at Fordham University under the guidance of the distinguished theologian Protopresbyter John Meyendorff. The topic was "Ivan the Terrible as a Religious Type."

Was this choice accidental? Out of hundreds of topics on Russian history and Byzantine studies, Dvorkin chose this one. He was interested in the psychology of an autocrat who sincerely believed himself to be an instrument of divine providence, and considered the oprichnina and mass executions to be a godly deed, a form of purification of Holy Russia from defilement. For Dvorkin, Ivan the Terrible is not just a historical figure. He is the archetype of a ruler endowed with a sacred mission, for whom the end

(the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, as he understood it) justifies any means, even the most cruel ones.

By studying Ivan the Terrible, Dvorkin, perhaps without realizing it, formulated his own credo. He seemed to be trying on the image of a man possessing supreme knowledge, who had been given the right to judge and punish "enemies of the faith." This dissertation became a symbolic prologue to his future activities. He found his hero, his ideal "witch hunter" endowed with sacred authority.

Against the backdrop of this brilliant academic career, Dvorkin's critics and opponents point to his "shady biography." Numerous publications and court documents contain references to alleged psychiatric diagnoses made in the USSR: "cyclothymia" (a form of bipolar disorder), "pathological personality development," and "psychophysical infantilism." Opponents argue that these diagnoses explain a lot: his obsession, his tendency to "reform" without a serious scientific basis, his need to find enemies, and his black-and-white view of the world.

We cannot confirm or deny the authenticity of these medical conclusions. However, the very fact of their existence in the public domain adds another touch to his complex psychological portrait. Perhaps for Dvorkin, the fight against "sects" became not just a matter of church obedience, but a way to bring order to his inner chaos by projecting it onto the outside world and dividing it into "us" and "them," into "the righteous" and "the heretics."

His career at Radio Liberty was a crucial stage in his development. It was not just a journalist job. It was a school of information and psychological warfare. Broadcasting to the Soviet Union, Dvorkin learned the art of propaganda: creating the right narratives, shaping public opinion, dividing the world into "friends" and "enemies." He honed his ability to speak

simply and persuasively, appealing not to reason but to the emotions and deep fears of his audience. This skill would become his main weapon in the future.

The American School of Hate: Cult Awareness Network

A decisive turning point in Alexander Dvorkin's life was his rapprochement with the American anti-cult movement.

It was a dark and violent time. A wave of panic swept across America in connection with "new religious movements." Society, frightened by the tragedy in Jonestown, saw "brainwashing" and "zombification" in any non-traditional group. This wave of fear gave rise to an ugly phenomenon known as "deprogramming." Self-proclaimed "deprogrammers" offered concerned relatives a service to "rescue" their loved ones from "cults" for huge fees.

In practice, this "rescue" resembled medieval torture. The "patient" was kidnapped, forcibly held in isolation, deprived of sleep and food, subjected to days of interrogation, psychological pressure, humiliation, and sometimes physical violence. Newspapers of the time were full of headlines about beatings, rapes, and even murders committed by "deprogrammers." The flagship of this movement was an organization with the melodious name Cult Awareness Network (CAN). According to numerous testimonies, Alexander Dvorkin collaborated with this organization during this period.

This part of his biography is a closely guarded secret. In 1996, after returning to Russia, Dvorkin appeared on the popular television program Vremenchko. According to eyewitness accounts preserved in internet forum archives, he confirmed two facts on live television: that he was a US citizen and that he had collaborated with CAN. Today, it is impossible to find a

video recording of this broadcast — it has been deleted. Text transcripts and references are carefully "cleaned up."

One of Dvorkin's most ardent allies, his press secretary Evgeny Mukhtarov, made enormous efforts to remove any mention of his boss's connection with CAN from the Russian Wikipedia. His years of "edit wars," threats, and insults toward other editors are documented in the history of his account blocks. Such a fierce desire to hide this fact speaks volumes. If the collaboration with CAN was just innocent consulting, why put so much effort into burying the memory of it?

The answer is simple: Dvorkin did not just "collaborate." In the US, he went to school where he was taught practical methods of struggle. It was in this environment — an environment of moral panic, commercialized "struggle," and justification of violence in the name of "good" — that Dvorkin absorbed ideology and methods. He saw how effective hate speech is. How easy it is to deprive a person of their subjectivity and justify any actions against them by calling them a "zombie." How the technology of creating an "enemy image" through the media works, how the stories of "former adherents" are used to create shocking content. He did not study religious studies, but *sectarianism* — the craft of social harassment.

It is not surprising that his hasty departure from the United States and return to Russia in 1992 strangely coincided with the beginning of a wave of legal proceedings against "deprogrammers" and the decline of CAN. He returned with an already formed system of views — the foundation on which the ideology of intolerance subsequently grew.

The Legacy of Nazi Regime: Ideological Roots

It would seem that anti-cultism is a purely American phenomenon, born of the specifics of American society. However, the roots of the ideology that Dvorkin brought to Russia go much deeper and into much darker layers of European history. To understand the genesis of his "machine," it is necessary to trace the sinister chain of ideological continuity.

Dvorkin himself repeatedly spoke with admiration about his teacher, the Danish Lutheran theologian Johannes Aagaard, at whose "Dialogue Center" he was trained. Aagaard was one of the central figures of European anti-cultism. But who was Aagaard's teacher?

Aagaard was assisted in the creation of his center by the Bavarian pastor Wilhelm Haack. Haack, in turn, was a direct follower and ideological heir of Walter Künneth, one of the darkest figures in 20th-century German theology.

Today, the name Walter Künneth is firmly associated with Nazi regime. Back in 1921, the Apologetic Center was established in Berlin, an organization whose stated goal was to combat "sects" and protect the purity of the Protestant faith. In 1932, Künneth became its leader. But the methods used by the center were frighteningly familiar:

- **Gathering compromising information and creating "blacklists":** The center methodically collected information about any religious and philosophical movements that did not fit into the conservative Protestant standard.
- **Using hate speech in the media:** Through publications and lectures, an image of an "enemy" threatening the German nation and spirituality was created.
- **Pressure on state structures:** The center lobbied for repressive measures against "undesirables."

With the Nazis coming to power, the work of the Apologetic Center became extremely sought after. Künnet's methodology for identifying and branding "enemies" became an ideal tool for the Gestapo and the Ministry of Propaganda. His anti-Semitic works became a theological justification for genocide.

This line of succession - **Künneth** → **Haack** → **Aagaard** → **Dvorkin** - is no coincidence. It demonstrates that it was not simply American anti-cultism that was imported into Russia, but its European, historically compromised version, refined by the Nazis. The tools of dehumanization, dossier compilation, media harassment, and lobbying for repression, developed in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, were carefully preserved and passed on to a new generation of "fighters for the purity of faith."

A prophet in his own land: Escape to the homeland?

On December 31, 1991, Alexander Dvorkin returned to Moscow. The official version is that it was a spiritual impulse. Inspired by the fall of communism and guided by the blessing of his spiritual father, John Meyendorff, he returned to serve his resurgent homeland.

However, there is another, more pragmatic version explaining this sudden return. By the early 1990s, clouds were gathering over the "deprogrammers" and their main organization, the Cult Awareness Network (CAN), in the United States. Society was horrified by the consequences of their activities. High-profile lawsuits began. In 1995, CAN was found guilty by court of kidnapping and forcible "deprogramming" and sentenced to a multimillion-dollar fine, which led to its bankruptcy. America was becoming too dangerous a place for those involved in this dirty war.

Was Dvorkin's return to Russia a strategic retreat, an escape from possible legal consequences?

Russia in the 1990s was the perfect place for someone like him to work. The country had just gone through the collapse of an ideology and was in a spiritual vacuum. Millions of people, deprived of their usual points of reference, rushed to search for new meanings. Against this backdrop, a wide variety of religious and esoteric movements flourished, from Protestant preachers to Eastern gurus. Society and the state were completely unprepared for this explosion of religious pluralism.

Alexander Dvorkin stepped into these murky waters. He had an American degree, an American passport, American experience, and - most importantly - he brought with him a ready-made concept and the language to describe it. He explained that all new movements were "totalitarian sects" and proposed an effective strategy: not to engage in theological disputes, but to shift the conversation to the realm of public safety. To talk not about dogma, but about "threats."

He arrived as an "expert," as a man who "has had face to face encounters with the enemy ." And he was welcomed with open arms. No one asked uncomfortable questions about his past, his connections to CAN, or his true teachers.

Just a few months later, in the summer of 1992, Dvorkin began his "anti-cult" activities in the Department of Religious Education and Catechesis of the Moscow Patriarchate. In his words, it was "church obedience," "sewer work" that "someone had to do."

In reality, it was the beginning of building an empire. The foundation was laid in America, the blueprints inherited from the ideologues of the last century. All that remained was to start the machine.

The young hippie, who had found his place neither in the Soviet system nor in American freedom, finally found himself. In the new Russia, a "hunter" was born. An inquisitor, ready to burn "heresy" with a hot iron. He became an ideologist of hatred. And his work was just beginning.

Chapter 2.

Technologies of Destruction

There is no weapon in humanity's arsenal more powerful and insidious than the word. Alexander Dvorkin brought to Russia the technology of turning words into weapons of mass destruction. He understood that to win the war for minds, there was no need to prove one's rightness. All you need to do is convince everyone of the absolute wrongness and sinister nature of your opponent. Let's take a look at the mechanism he created to identify, demonize, and ultimately destroy anyone who dared to believe "incorrectly."

The Inquisitor's Code: The Invention of "Sectology"

Dvorkin's first salvo in the war was his pamphlet "Ten Questions for the Intrusive Stranger, or A Guide for Those Who Don't Want to Be Recruited." It was a simple, aggressive, and effective weapon. In it, using techniques honed by American anti-cultists, Dvorkin taught ordinary people to see any missionary of a non-traditional faith as a dangerous recruiter.

In 1994, the book "Sectology: Totalitarian Sects: An Experience in Systematic Research" was published. Professional religious scholars looked at his work with horror, pointing to its blatant incompetence, falsification of facts, and ideological bias.

Doctor of Law M.N. Kuznetsov claimed that the author of "Sectology," Dvorkin, was methodologically illiterate, that the book was written at the level of newspaper publications and was completely useless both from the

point of view of scientific religious studies and from the point of view of the needs of the Orthodox mission.

Doctor of Philology A.A. Panchenko delivered a harsh verdict that Dvorkin should be prosecuted for inciting religious hatred.

But the critics failed to understand the main point: Dvorkin's goal was not scientific research, but the creation of a weapon.

The power of his book lay in several key innovations:

- **The introduction of toxic vocabulary.** Dvorkin introduced terms that sounded scientific but were, in fact, poisonous labels:

"Totalitarian sect." The term "totalitarian sect" was simple, understandable, and extremely toxic. It instantly evoked associations with Russia's own totalitarian past, with the Gulag, with the suppression of individuality. It required no evidence or scientific analysis. It was enough to simply label any religious group with this term, and it automatically became an enemy, a threat to society, the family, and the state.

"Mind control," "zombification." These pseudoscientific terms turned free choice of faith into a malicious act that deprived a person of their will, and a believer into a "zombie" who needed to be "saved" even against their will.

- **Transferring the discourse from theology to criminology.** Instead of complex theological debates, Dvorkin proposed talking about threats: to mental health, to families, and to the state. This allowed him to appeal not to theologians, but to the general public and, most importantly, to law enforcement agencies.

Dvorkin replaced the rhetoric of "mind control" with the language of state security. In his account, "sectarians" were no longer just lost souls, but enemy agents, spies, saboteurs waging "spiritual aggression" against Russia.

"Sectology" became an ideological matrix according to which his followers began to shape reality. The inquisitor's code was written. All that remained was to assemble an army.

Building an Empire. The Engine: RACIRS and FECRIS — A Sect to Fight Sects

Every machine needs an engine. For Dvorkin's empire, this engine was a ramified network of organizations for legitimizing and scaling up its activities.

Russian Legion: Creation of RACIRS

First, in 1993, his flagship project appeared — the "Information and Consultation Center named after the Holy Martyr Irenaeus of Lyons," created under the wing of the Russian Orthodox Church. Very soon, this structure grew into a nationwide network — in February 2006, the Russian Association of Centers for the Study of Religions and Sects (RACIRS) was created. Alexander Dvorkin was, of course, elected president. On paper, everything looked respectable: an association of scientists and experts designed to "provide information and consulting assistance" to government agencies, the media, and society.

But behind the academic facade lay what critics would later call a "mafia structure." RACIRS was not a scientific association, but a ramified network, a kind of ideological secret service.

Structure and methods: The main center and core of RACIRS was the "Information and Advisory Center named after the Holy Martyr Irenaeus of Lyon," Dvorkin's personal fiefdom in Moscow. From there, threads stretched to dozens of regional "branches." These branches operated according to a single template:

- **Monitoring and reporting:** Local "Dvorkinites" kept tabs on any "wrong" religious groups in their area. They went to their meetings, collected literature, and interviewed former followers and their upset relatives. Any rumor, any complaint, any quote taken out of context — everything was used. Files and card indexes of "compromising material" were created.
- **"Consultations" for the authorities:** The information gathered formed the basis of "analytical notes" and "consultations" that were sent to local administrations, education departments, and law enforcement agencies. An unprepared official or police officer, receiving such a document from "experts," saw it as an objective analysis rather than an ideological denunciation. This is how the image of the enemy was formed at the official level.
- **Media attacks:** Dvorkin's regional followers became the main spokespeople for the local press on the topic of "sectarianism." They gave interviews, wrote articles, appeared on television, and repeated the same clichés about "brainwashing," "zombification," and "destruction of families." An atmosphere of moral panic was created.
- **Provoking conflicts:** RACIRS' activities deliberately sowed discord. It turned relatives against each other, encouraging them to file police reports against their own loved ones. It turned any

domestic conflict involving a believer into "evidence of the destructive activities of the sect."

RACIRS became a source of collective intolerance. It was an army operating on the principle of "if you're not with us, you're a sectarian." Dvorkin built a structure that could reach anyone in any corner of the country, brand them, and set the persecution machine in motion. But a full-scale war required more than just a Russian network. It required international legitimacy.

European facade: FECRIS cover

Dvorkin's ambitions extended far beyond Russia. He sought international recognition, and he got it by becoming vice president of FECRIS (European Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Sectarianism). This organization was founded in 1994 in Paris and brought together "anti-cult" associations from dozens of countries. Its stated mission is to protect people from "destructive cultic deviations." Dvorkin's center naturally became the Russian representative in the organization, and he himself served as its vice president from 2009 to 2021.

To the uninitiated observer, FECRIS looked like an authoritative human rights organization, a European counterpart to Amnesty International, only in the field of religion. But upon closer inspection, this image crumbled to dust.

- **State funding:** Investigations showed that about 90% of FECRIS' budget came directly from the French government. It was not an independent public organization, but a structure that existed on French taxpayers' money and, therefore, pursued a certain state policy.

- **The French model:** It was in France that one of the toughest models for combating dissent in Europe was created. Laws were passed there allowing religious groups to be disbanded on the vague charge of "mind control" (*manipulation mentale*). It was this model that Dvorkin dreamed of importing to Russia, openly stating in his speeches:

"We need to introduce articles on 'psychological violence' and 'mind manipulation', as they did in France."

- **A hotbed of xenophobia:** Under the guise of protecting "victims of sects," FECRIS and its members across Europe promoted intolerance and xenophobia. For example, Ursula Cabert, a prominent figure in German anti-cultism, introduced the so-called "cult filter" in Hamburg, which resulted in people suspected of having ties to Scientologists being deprived of their jobs and denied loans.

FECRIS became the perfect cover for Dvorkin. His membership and high position in the organization allowed him to present his activities not as a narrowly confessional Orthodox mission, but as part of a pan-European struggle for human rights. He spoke at international conferences, referring to "European experience" and giving his local vendetta a global scale.

Legion of Darkness: Portraits of Comrades and Their Methods

The system of hatred could not exist without supporters — it needed executors. If Dvorkin was the ideologist, who were those who enthusiastically took up the banner of the "righteous struggle"? Official propaganda portrayed them as selfless devotees, but behind this benevolent image lay a gallery of murderers, pedophiles, swindlers, and individuals

with severe mental disorders. Dvorkin, with his rhetoric of total war, became a magnet for them. He gave them a banner, an enemy, and a sense of absolute righteousness.

The international syndicate of "saviors"

To legitimize his activities, Dvorkin needed international status, which he obtained through FECRIS. But who were these foreign "colleagues"?

- **Anton Hein (USA/Netherlands):** Founder of the Apologetics Index website, which Dvorkin had long recommended as an authoritative source. In the US, Hein was convicted of systematically sexually abusing his own 13-year-old niece and fled the country to avoid prison. He is now hiding in Amsterdam, and there is an arrest warrant out for him in the US.
- **Jakub Jahl (Czech Republic):** A Czech so-called "cult expert" who used charity work and helping orphaned children in Tanzania as a cover. A 2025 journalistic investigation uncovered the horrific reality: Jahl embezzled all donations, using them to buy drugs and a luxurious lifestyle, and, according to victims and eyewitnesses, abused children from the orphanage and local residents.
- **Rick Alan Ross (USA):** One of the pioneers of "violent deprogramming," with an official psychiatric diagnosis of personality disorder with sociopathic tendencies. Ross was a consultant to the FBI during the Waco tragedy (1993), where 76 members of a religious community, including 23 children, died as a result of a raid and fire on the community's ranch.

Russian personnel: violence as a calling

The model, which had been successful in the West, was replicated in Russia. RACIRS' "anti-cult centers" became magnets for individuals of a very specific disposition.

- **Valery Prikhodko (Rostov-on-Don):** Previously convicted of beating a man to death, Prikhodko set up a "deprogramming" center after his release and became a leading "expert on extremism" in southern Russia. Dvorkin's ideology gave him a chance to engage in violence again, but now under a "noble" pretext. The system did not simply accept the murderer into its ranks — it gave him a mandate and ideological justification to continue his violence.
- **Evgeny Mukhtarov (Yaroslavl):** Dvorkin's press secretary and right-hand man, responsible for the information war. His methods were clearly evident in his fight against Wikipedia administrators, where he fanatically "cleaned up" the article about Dvorkin, removing inconvenient facts and not shying away from threats and insults against his opponents (for example, about cooperation with the American criminal organization CAN).

These are not random people. It is a system. As anti-cult researchers point out: *"If the leader of a sect has criminal or perverse tendencies, suffers from mental disorders, then a mechanism of psychological induction comes into play, a kind of infection of the sect members with the vices and mental pathologies of the founder."* It is as if he were describing his own organization.

The most striking thing is that Dvorkin's organization itself perfectly fits his own definition of a "totalitarian cult." Let's apply his criteria to his brainchild.

1. The presence of a charismatic leader who is attributed with divine wisdom. Alexander Dvorkin is the unchallenged and indisputable authority in his milieu. His word is law, his books are the sacred writings of "cult experts." Any attempt to challenge his opinion is perceived by his followers as heresy and working for the "enemy."

2. The presence of an "inner circle" of followers who emulate the leader. A circle of devoted followers has formed around Dvorkin, ready to do anything to protect the guru and his ideology. Their behavior — aggression, insults, and fanatical devotion — is an exact copy of Dvorkin's own style.

3. Concealment of true goals. On paper, anti-cult organizations are engaged in "research," "information," and "protection of society." In reality, their main goal is to lobby for repressive laws, destroy competitors (in this case, any alternative worldviews), and legitimize violence under the guise of "expert" activity.

4. Intolerance of criticism. Any scientist, human rights activist, or journalist who dares to question Dvorkin's methods is immediately branded a "cult defender," "Scientology agent," or simply "bought by enemies." Dialogue is impossible in principle. There is only one truth — Dvorkin's truth.

Thus, under the guise of fighting "totalitarian sects," Dvorkin has created his own, perhaps the most influential and dangerous sect in modern Russia — a sect armed with administrative resources.

Weapons of Mass Destruction: Demonization Technologies

With its ideology and structure in place, Dvorkin's machine began a systematic war, using a refined set of technologies.

1. Media terror. Dvorkin became one of the most sought-after "experts" on Russian television, where he recited a set of memorized mantras: "totalitarian sect," "mind control," "destruction of families." His website, iriney.ru, turned into a wall of shame filled with anonymous letters from "victims" and blatant fakes aimed at creating an image of the enemy.

2. Legal battering ram. Dvorkin actively lobbied for tougher legislation.

He did not simply use existing laws, he actively influenced their creation and application, turning Russian legislation into a minefield for dissenters.

After the adoption in 1997 of the new law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations," which divided all organizations into "traditional" and "non-traditional," Dvorkin gained a powerful tool for discrimination. But the real gift for him was the 2002 law "On Countering Extremist Activity."

This law, with its extremely vague wording, allowed virtually anything to be declared "extremism": assertions about the superiority of one's religion, criticism of officials, dissemination of "knowingly false information." It was Dvorkin's "sectology" that became the unofficial commentary on this law, a guide to its application against religious minorities.

He openly admired French legislation and dreamed of introducing it in Russia. He repeatedly stated in his speeches that articles on "psychological violence" and "mind manipulation" should be introduced, as they were in France.

At first glance, this sounds like a concern for people. In reality, it is a proposal to legalize absolute arbitrariness. The concepts of "psychological violence" and "mind manipulation" cannot be defined legally. Any belief, any sermon, any educational activity can be called "manipulation." The

adoption of such laws would mean the end of freedom of conscience and freedom of speech. It would turn the state into a "thought police" and the informer-"expert" into a supreme judge.

The apotheosis of this process was Dvorkin's appointment in 2009 as head of the Expert Council for State Religious Studies Expertise at the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation. This step, which caused "shock among specialists," as religious scholars wrote, became a point of no return. A man without a relevant secular religious studies education, whose methodology was criticized by the scientific community as pseudoscientific, gained control of a powerful state lever. His personal ideology became an official instrument of the state.

Now Dvorkin's "opinion" was no longer just an opinion. It became an "expert opinion" on the basis of which the Ministry of Justice could refuse registration, initiate an investigation, or liquidate any religious organization. Members of RACIRS and Dvorkin personally gained a monopoly on the truth on the highest level.

This new power allowed him and his network to directly influence legislation and law enforcement practices.

- **The Law on Extremist Activity (2002):** This law became the main tool for cracking down on undesirables. But it was just an empty form that needed to be filled with content. It was "experts" like Dvorkin who decided whose texts and sermons were "extremist." Their linguistic and religious studies expertise, often based on falsifications and biased interpretations, formed the basis for convictions.
- **The Yarovaya Law (2016):** This package of anti-terrorism amendments significantly tightened legislation on "missionary

activity." Now, any preaching outside of religious buildings or without special permits became illegal. This was a direct blow to all non-traditional religions in Russia. Dvorkin and his supporters were the main lobbyists and ideological justifiers of these measures.

- **Recognition of organizations as extremist:** It was on the initiative of the Expert Council under the Ministry of Justice and on the basis of expert reports prepared by structures affiliated with RACIRS that dozens of organizations were banned in Russia. The most high-profile example is Jehovah's Witnesses, a peaceful pacifist organization that Dvorkin's machine turned into dangerous extremists in the eyes of the state.

The conveyor belt of destruction: from label to prison

How exactly did this system work in practice? The process of destroying any undesirable group was automated and went through several clearly thought-out stages.

Stage 1: Labeling. It all started with a label. Dvorkin or his center declared a particular organization a "totalitarian sect" or "destructive cult." The reason could be anything: a complaint from a disgruntled former follower, an order from competitors, or simply the fact that the group had become too visible.

Stage 2: Media attack. Next, the media got involved. Through a network of loyal journalists, his own websites, and public lectures, Dvorkin launched a massive information campaign. Public opinion was pumped up with fear. The websites of his centers turned into walls of shame, where real tragedies, rumors, and outright lies were published side by side. Any crime committed by a person who had once attended yoga classes or read an esoteric book was presented as a direct consequence of the activities of the "sect." The

goal was to create an atmosphere of moral panic in which any violence against "sectarians" would seem justified.

Stage 3: Pseudo-expertise. This is the key stage that turns harassment into a state document. When the security forces needed a legal basis to begin repression, they turned to "religious expertise." And where did they go? To the Expert Council for State Religious Studies Expertise under the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation. And who has headed this council since 2009? Alexander Dvorkin.

The man who had unleashed the persecution himself now acted as an "impartial" state expert to confirm his own accusations. His conclusions, written in pseudo-scientific language of hatred, formed the basis of criminal cases. Ideology became a sentence.

Stage 4: Forceful Suppression. Once they had the "expert opinion" in their hands, the FSB and the police began to act. Searches, interrogations, seizure of literature, arrests. Laws designed to combat terrorists and violent extremists were used against peaceful believers who had legally registered their organizations.

Stage 5: Judicial Liquidation. In court, the prosecutor read out the charges based on Dvorkin's expert opinion. The judge, who had no special knowledge of religious studies and was under pressure from public opinion created by the media, handed down a guilty verdict. The organization was banned as "extremist," and its followers were sent to prison.

The pattern of "Dvorkin (label) → media (panic) → Dvorkin (expert opinion) → security forces (repression) → court (verdict)" worked flawlessly. It was a ruthless process that reduced the right to freedom of conscience, guaranteed by the Constitution, to dust.

Chapter 3.

Gallery of Broken Lives

Social Death: The Case of Anatoly Garmaev, the "Sectarian in a Cassock"

There is murder by bullet, and there is murder by reputation. The latter is slower, but often more painful. The victim is still breathing, walking the earth, but for society, he is already dead. This is precisely the kind of "social execution" that Orthodox teacher and missionary Anatoly Garmaev experienced.

Garmaev did not build brotherhoods numbering in the thousands. His "weapon" and his "crime," according to the anti-cult network, was his thinking. He was an unconventional person, inconvenient for a system accustomed to simple and unambiguous answers.

Coming from a Buryat family, he absorbed the culture of the East, which gave his thoughts a special depth and paradoxicality. According to some sources, in his youth he went through a serious fascination with Buddhism, and this experience did not go to waste. He learned to subtly feel and analyze the states of human consciousness, which later made him a unique pastor and psychologist. In the eyes of his future persecutors, this would become another "aggravating circumstance," adding a piquant "suspiciousness" to his image. When he converted to Orthodox Christianity, he brought with him a sharp mind and a depth of inquiry that were not common among many of his fellow believers.

Imagine the late 1990s. The ruins of the Soviet education system, abandoned, unwanted teenagers, "street children" for whom the path lay either in prison or in the grave. And amid this chaos, a man appears — a priest, but not one of those who sit quietly in the temple. Anatoly Garmayev created the Orthodox community-commune "Kovcheg" ("Ark") in the village of Avdotino near Moscow. It was a real lifeline. He gathered difficult teenagers, former drug addicts, children from dysfunctional families, and gave them what they had never had: a home, meaning, work, and faith.

One of his former pupils, Sergei, recalled how he came to Father Anatoly with three convictions for juvenile crimes, a knife in his pocket, and only one thought in his head: where to get a fix. He didn't preach to him. He simply gave him an axe, showed him how to chop wood, and sat him down at the table with everyone else. For the first time in his life, Sergei was seen not as trash, but as a human being. Father Anatoly pulled him back from the brink.

The "Ark" became a unique and successful project. People wrote about it and held it up as an example. But success in Russia is a dangerous thing, especially if you are doing something unconventional. Too lively, too active, too *different* from the parish routine, the community became a target. Soon, whispers began to circulate in church and church-related circles: "Something is wrong there... too much freedom... too much influence from the leader."

His books and lectures in the 1990s and 2000s were a real revelation for many. While most pulpits offered either dry sermons or angry denunciations of the modern world, Father Anatoly spoke to people in their own language. He was not afraid to use modern psychology, integrating it into the

Orthodox worldview. His book *Stages of Moral Development in Children* became a reference book for thousands of Orthodox parents. He did not offer ready-made recipes; he taught people to think. For example, he explained that child theft is not just a "sin," but often a cry for help, a symptom of a lack of parental attention. He taught parents not to punish, but to understand and heal.

Father Anatoly Garmaev often repeated that the human soul is not just a black box into which one can simply "put" the right dogmas. It is a complex and delicate instrument that can be out of tune. The task of a pastor is to be not only a judge, but also a tuner, a doctor: psychology provides the language to describe these disorders, and the Gospel provides the means to heal them.

For thousands of people, his words were a breath of fresh air. He helped them build healthy relationships in their families, find common ground with their teenage children, and heal emotional wounds. He was a pastor-healer. But that is precisely what made him a target. In a system where the human soul is considered the exclusive domain of the priest (in its most conservative interpretation), any mention of "psychology" was already suspicious. And "psychological techniques" — a term from Dvorkin's lexicon — sounded almost like a curse word.

Dvorkin's "machine," for which any non-standard spiritual leader is a potential "sectarian," got to work. Anatoly Garmaev, an Orthodox priest, was publicly declared a "sectarian in a cassock," the creator of a "pseudo-Orthodox destructive cult."

The attack was carried out according to all the rules of black PR. Stigmatization through terminology. The main accusation was the use of "psychological techniques." This scary word immediately turned any

psychological technique, any exercise in self-knowledge, into "dangerous manipulation of consciousness." The dialogue with one's own inner world, which Garmaev proposed, was presented as a recruitment technique of a "destructive cult." Information campaign. The website of the Iriney of Lyon Center, Dvorkin's fiefdom, became a springboard for the attack. Let's examine one of the typical "exposé" articles. It begins with an acknowledgment of Garmaev's talent (a demagogic technique of "yes, but..."). "Of course, Father Anatoly is a gifted preacher," the author writes, "but behind his popularity lies a dangerous substitution." The author then takes Garmaev's idea about the importance of going through the "stages of childhood" and twists it: "Garmaev suggests that adults artificially 'revert to childhood' using questionable psychological techniques, which leads to the infantilization of the personality and makes it vulnerable to manipulation." The idea of understanding children is turned into an accusation of inducing a trance. This was not a scientific debate. It was a targeted campaign of dehumanization. Pressure through institutions. Dvorkin and his organization did not limit themselves to articles. They used their administrative resources. Letters and denunciations flowed into the diocese where Garmaev served, into the scientific institutions where he could speak, and into the publishing houses where his books were printed. "A letter signed by Professor Dvorkin, an expert at the Ministry of Justice, landed on the desk of the university rector," recalls one of the organizers of Garmaev's lectures. "Two days later, I got a call from the rector's office informing me that Father Anatoly's planned lecture was canceled 'for technical reasons.' This happened several times. They created a vacuum around him."

The harassment mechanism was launched with practiced precision:

- **Pseudo-expertise:** Garmaev's methods — work therapy, communal living, deep personal contact with his students — were presented in

the "expert" conclusions of Dvorkin's followers as "mind manipulation," "behavioral control," and "breaking ties with family." The successful rehabilitation of drug addicts was called "psychological violence."

- **Media campaign:** The media was flooded with articles portraying the “Ark” as a sinister place and its founder as a dangerous "guru" luring gullible young people into his clutches.
- **Pressure on the hierarchy:** Relying on the media hype they had created, Dvorkin and his supporters elicited a response from the church leadership. Orthodox bureaucrats, frightened by accusations of "condoning a sectarian," chose to sacrifice the inconvenient missionary.

After the public accusations against Garmaev, his relatives recalled his feelings about what had happened. He perceived the situation as a distortion of the essence of his work: his teaching methods were called manipulation, the work of his students was called exploitation, and his Orthodox approach was called heresy.

According to his acquaintances, what caused him the most pain was not the personal accusations, but the consequences for his educational work: the damage to his reputation could close off opportunities to help teenagers from disadvantaged families, whom he was trying to keep off the streets.

Anatoly Garmaev did not remain silent in response to the accusations. He realized that he was facing not just criticism, but a systemic phenomenon that had come to be known in Orthodox circles as "Dvorkinism."

Critics of Dvorkin's methods characterized them as an ideological approach based on finding enemies and stigmatization. The main complaints boiled down to the following: instead of theological or scientific argumentation,

labels and scare tactics ("sect," "mind control," "psychological techniques") were used, and the goal was not debate, but the suppression of dissent through public vilification and administrative pressure.

He proposed a clear strategy of resistance: study the enemy, do not remain silent, and defend yourself legally. He and his supporters did indeed participate in court proceedings.

Dvorkin had powerful administrative and ecclesiastical resources on his side, as well as his status as a "professor" and "expert." The courts most often dismissed the lawsuits, citing the defendant's "evaluative judgments." But this struggle was not in vain. It forced Dvorkin's machine to pay for its slander and exposed the pseudoscientific nature of its methods.

The conflict with anti-sectarian structures became a severe test in the last years of Garmaev's life. Public accusations of "sectarianism," the posting of critical materials on the website of the Center of Irenaeus of Lyons, and television reports all created an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust around his name.

He continued to fight: he served as rector of a church in Volgograd, published books (seven in the last four years), recorded sermons, and led the Otrada community. But the damage to his reputation had been done. His influence waned, and the educational projects he had pinned his hopes on were threatened. Many who could have received help never learned about his work — the fear of the "sect" label proved stronger.

In recent years, his health had been deteriorating. On March 17, 2021, at the age of 72, Anatoly Garmaev died suddenly of cardiovascular disease.

"The last few years were very difficult for him," recalls a close friend. "He was a man of action, a man of his word. And they locked him up within

four walls. He tried to write, but publishers were afraid to print his works. His health began to fail, one thing after another. It wasn't physical pain. It was the pain of not being able to do what you were born to do. He was simply erased from life."

The man who saved dozens of souls became an outcast himself, betrayed by the very system he served. He did not die immediately. He died slowly, from anguish and the realization that his good name had been trampled on forever. His physical death a few years later was only a formality. Socially, he was killed much earlier — on the day he was labeled a "sectarian."

The Case of Georgy Kochetkov: The Inquisition Against Its Own

If the story of Anatoly Garmayev was a tragedy of hunting down the "Other," then the fate of priest Georgy Kochetkov is a chilling chronicle of how the system devours its own. This is a story about a civil war within a single faith, where living, breathing, truth-seeking Christianity was declared heresy by those accustomed to dead formalism, control, and power. This is an inquisition unleashed not against a stranger, but against a brother whose only sin was that he took the Gospel too seriously.

1. A living community

Imagine an old Moscow church, recently rescued from ruin, still smelling of fresh plaster and paint that has not yet dried completely. It is full of people, but this is not the motley, scattered crowd that comes in to "light a candle." This is a gathering where people are united in a single impulse. The Divine Liturgy is taking place. But here you don't hear the usual, lulling murmur in a half-understandable language. Every word of the Gospel, every prayer is spoken in living, modern Russian. And this brings about a miracle: the

ancient texts cease to be a ritual backdrop and become an event taking place here and now.

"Let us pray to the Lord for peace..." — this is not a formula, but a real call to pray for peace, which resonates in the heart of everyone. *"I believe in one God, the Father..."* — this is not a cursory reading, but a joint, meaningful, powerful confession, where each voice merges into a choir affirming its faith in the face of a godless age.

People in the church do not stand like statues. They pray. Their faces are meaningful. They know *what* is happening, *what* they are participating *in*. This is not magic, but a sacrament. Not a ritual, but an encounter.

Now let's move from the church to an ordinary Moscow apartment. A dozen people are sitting at a table laden with cups of tea and simple cookies — a professor and a student, a doctor and an artist, a young mother and a gray-haired old man. This is a "family" — one of the small groups of the Preobrazhensky Brotherhood. They have just read a passage from the Gospel together, and now they are discussing it. There is no patronizing tone, no memorized answers from the catechism. There is a lively, sometimes sharp, but always respectful conversation.

"It seems to me that Christ's words, 'The Kingdom of God is within you,' mean that you don't need to look for it somewhere outside, in lavish rituals..." "I disagree." What about the Church then? Isn't it the beginning of the Kingdom here on earth? — But what should this Church be like? One that excommunicates for "wrong" thoughts, or one that is capable of accommodating everyone who is searching?

This is the essence of "Kochetkovism." Not a sect, not a secret society, but a desperate attempt to restore to church life what has been lost over centuries

of formalism and fear: meaningful faith, a living community, brotherly love, and intellectual honesty.

It was faith with open eyes. Faith that is not afraid to ask questions and seek answers to them. A faith that requires not blind obedience, but complete devotion — of mind, heart, and will. And it was precisely this life, this energy, this freedom that became the main threat to those who saw the Church not as the Body of Christ, but as a rigid hierarchical structure based on fear, control, and unconditional obedience. The system does not tolerate life. It saw this living organism as a cancerous tumor and decided to cut it out with a red-hot iron.

2. The path of a priest: Builder of brotherhood

To understand why Father Georgy Kochetkov became a pain in the neck of the system, one must see who he was. He was neither a marginal figure nor a self-taught dissident. He was flesh and blood of the Moscow intelligentsia, a man of deep academic culture, whose path to faith was the result not of an emotional impulse, but of a long and painful intellectual search.

Born in Moscow in 1950, he, like many of his peers, grew up in an atheistic environment. But in the mid-1960s, during the "thaw" years, when the air was intoxicatingly filled with freedom and the search for meaning, he came to the Orthodox faith. After graduating from the prestigious Plekhanov Institute of National Economy and completing his postgraduate studies at the Institute of Economics, he seemed destined for a successful academic career. But he chose a different path. In the early 1970s, risking everything, he began underground missionary and catechetical work. In the stifling atmosphere of Brezhnev's stagnation, he gathered around him people who were thirsty for the truth and revealed Christ to them.

It was not like a normal parish. Here, in semi-basement rooms and secret apartments, the seeking intelligentsia flocked: physicists and philologists, artists and doctors. His main work became catechesis — something that had been almost completely lost in the official church. He created a long-term, well-thought-out system for preparing people for baptism and entry into church life. It was a real spiritual university. For months, even years, people studied the Holy Scriptures, the history of the Church, and the basics of dogmatics. Faith ceased to be blind; it became conscious. "We want people to know what and whom they believe in," Father Georgy said in one of his lectures. "Baptism is not a magical rite that guarantees salvation. It is an entry into a covenant with God, an acceptance of responsibility for one's own life and for the life of the Church. How can one enter into a covenant without knowing its terms?"

This was Orthodoxy with a human face — open, lively, searching, communal. Too bright. Too free.

This activity could not go unnoticed. In 1980, he enrolled in the Leningrad Theological Academy, trying to legalize his ministry. In 1983, on the eve of his final year, he was expelled. The reason was a denunciation by the "authorized representative for religious affairs." The reason was his overly lively mission, overly bold conversations, and overly independent mind. A dispute with Baptists, in which he brilliantly defended Orthodoxy, was the last straw. His ordination as a priest, planned for Easter, was canceled.

This was the first blow, the first label of "untrustworthy." But he did not break. In 1988, at the dawn of Perestroika, he unofficially established the St. Filaret Orthodox Christian Institute (SFI) — the first non-state theological university in the country, opened back in Soviet times. In 1989, he was finally ordained as a priest.

His energy seemed inexhaustible. He not only preached and taught. He was building.

- **He was building a brotherhood.** He brought together the scattered underground circles of the 1970s and 1980s into a powerful movement — the Preobrazhensky Community of Small Orthodox Brotherhoods. It was a unique structure that revived the principles of the early Christian community, where faith was experienced not alone but in brotherly communion.
- **He was building churches.** In the early 1990s, when the sites of ruined churches were being returned to the Church, his community took on the unimaginable. They restored the Sretensky Monastery (Vladimir Cathedral) on Bolshaya Lubyanka in the very center of Moscow, and then the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Pechatniki. These churches became centers of attraction for thousands of people.
- **He was building Thought.** He develops a unique system of deep, long-term catechesis that prepares people for a conscious entry into the Church. He initiates a colossal effort to translate liturgical texts into modern Russian so that they can be understood by everyone.

Father Georgy Kochetkov was a creator. He built a living Church. And it was precisely this construction that was perceived by the ideologues of hatred as undermining the foundations of their own power.

3. "The Modern Inquisition": The Beginning of the Attack

The attack on Father Georgy and his Brotherhood did not begin immediately. It developed gradually, as his community grew and strengthened. The ideologues of hatred, led by Alexander Dvorkin, saw this vibrant movement as a threat to their monopoly on determining what

constituted "correct" Orthodoxy. Dvorkin was quickly joined by other prominent figures from the conservative wing of the Church — Archimandrite (now Metropolitan) Tikhon (Shevkunov), Archpriest Dimitry Smirnov, and the media mouthpiece in the form of the Radonezh radio station.

A powerful ideological front was formed, and the entire arsenal of anti-cult technologies was put into action.

Step one: Labeling. The Brotherhood was declared a "guruist sect." Father Georgy himself was an authoritarian "guru" who demanded unquestioning obedience from his followers. This was the first and main blow. The term "sect" instantly removed Kochetkov from the field of normal church discussion and placed him in the category of enemies with whom one does not argue, but fights.

Step two: Creating a "body of evidence." Dvorkin and his supporters began to methodically construct an image of the enemy. Any peculiarity of the brotherhood's life was turned inside out and presented as a sign of sectarianism. In his articles and speeches, Dvorkin did not bother to analyze Kochetkov's theology. He used the method of substitution, creating an ugly caricature.

Father Georgy's teaching thesis: "Conscious membership in the Church through deep preparation (catechesis)."

Dvorkin's manipulative interpretation: "Division of the Church into 'full' members (the elite) and 'incomplete' members (the rabble, the profane)."

Father Georgy's teaching: "Close community life in small groups ("families") for mutual support."

Dvorkin's manipulative interpretation: "The destruction of traditional families, the establishment of total control over the lives of adherents."

Father Georgy's teaching: "Intellectual, modern language of preaching, dialogue with culture and science."

Dvorkin's manipulative interpretation: "Gnosticism, elitism, haughty opposition to the 'common people'."

Step three: Falsification of the teaching. The most terrible weapon was direct slander, clothed in theological form. Dvorkin formulated the main accusation — "ecclesiological heresy." He claimed that Kochetkov divided the Church into two types: "full" members (his own, "initiated") and "incomplete" members, "the rabble" (everyone else). This was a monstrous caricature of the idea of conscious and responsible membership in the Church. Kochetkov's idea of responsibility was distorted in his crooked mirror into an accusation of creating a proud caste.

It got worse. Denunciations and quotes taken out of context were used. Kochetkov began to be credited with the most unthinkable dogmatic errors. Accusations circulated from one lecture to another, from one article to another, stating that he: denies the immortality of the soul, is teaching about its "mortality"; does not believe in angels and demons, considering them only "symbols"; doubts the Ever-Virginity of the Mother of God.

These accusations did not need to be proven. It was enough to state them repeatedly and confidently, referring to his status as an "expert." A lie repeated a hundred times began to be perceived as the truth, creating a toxic cloud of suspicion around Kochetkov and his brotherhood.

The spearhead of the attack was the activity of Alexander Dvorkin himself. His article "Methods of Mind Control in the Community of Priest Georgy

Kochetkov" is a textbook example of anti-cult demagoguery. It is a masterpiece of Orwellian inversion, where healthy processes are described in terms of pathology.

Analysis of Dvorkin's method:

Element of community life	Dvorkin's interpretation (pathologization)
Deep catechesis (proclamation)	"A well-oiled machine that absorbs, processes, and subjugates people." "Brainwashing."
Small groups ("families")	"A system of total control" where the catechist-supervisor monitors every step.
Regular meetings and common rules	"Behavior control," "suppression of individuality," creation of

	dependence on the group.
The authority of the priest and catechists	"Guruism," "cult of personality," demand for unquestioning obedience, suppression of criticism.
General spiritual attitude, joy of faith	"Love bombing" — false euphoria used for recruitment.

Dvorkin and the St. Irenaeus of Lyons Information and Consultation Center he created did not limit themselves to analyzing "methods." They struck at the very heart — at Father Georgy's theology. Taking phrases out of context from his catechism "Go, Teach All Nations," they accused him of the most serious dogmatic crimes: that he allegedly does not recognize Christ as "consubstantial with the Father" and the Holy Spirit as Lord. For any Orthodox Christian, this accusation is equivalent to an accusation of Arianism — an ancient heresy condemned by the First Ecumenical Council.

This was no longer criticism. It was anathema. It was an attempt to push Father Georgy and thousands of his followers out of the Orthodox world, to declare them heretics who had nothing to do with the Church. The Inquisition was working at full capacity. The bonfires were not yet burning, but the fires of reputation had already been lit.

4. The battle for the community: From churches to souls

From the early 1990s, the war moved from the theoretical to the practical. War for everything: for churches, for reputations, for people's souls.

The first battlefield was the churches restored by the community. When the Preobrazhensky Brotherhood occupied the Vladimir Cathedral of the Sretensky Monastery, a campaign to oust them began. Black PR was used. It was then that one of the dirtiest slanderous stories was born — about the incident with priest Mikhail Dubovitsky. In 1997, critics accused Father Georgy and his community of allegedly "harassing, beating, and forcibly hospitalizing in a psychiatric hospital" Mikhail Dubovitsky. This story, which has been repeatedly refuted, nevertheless became one of the main "proofs" of the "sectarian cruelty" of the Kochetkovites and is still being circulated on anti-cultist resources. When the monastery was transferred to a new monastic community led by Archimandrite Tikhon (Shevkunov), one of Kochetkov's main opponents, the conflict reached its peak. The "Kochetkovites" were portrayed as invaders unwilling to give up the shrine.

But the most painful war was fought not for walls, but for souls. The "witch hunt" technique was launched throughout the country. Its consequences were devastating.

- **Pressure on followers:** A striking example was the incident in Nizhnevartovsk in 2012. There, the local priest, frightened by Dvorkin's lectures, simply stopped allowing parishioners of one of the churches associated with the Preobrazhensky Brotherhood to receive Communion. Without any canonical grounds, without a church trial, based solely on slander, people were deprived of the most important thing — participation in the Eucharist. It was an act

of blatant lawlessness and spiritual violence, a direct consequence of anti-cult hysteria.

- **An atmosphere of fear and division in families:** Dvorkin's propaganda poisoned minds. Relatives of Brotherhood members, after listening to horror stories on Radio Radonezh or reading libels on the internet, began to see their loved ones as "recruited zombies." Mothers feared for their children, husbands for their wives. Family ties were broken, friendships collapsed. People were made to feel ashamed of their faith, to feel inferior, to feel that they were "incorrect" Orthodox Christians. Their living spiritual experience was devalued and declared to be delusion and self-deception.

It was a sophisticated form of torture. People were deprived not only of Communion, but also of their good name, the support of their loved ones, and their peace of mind. They were forced to either renounce their community and their priest or accept the label of "sectarian" and outcast. The machine of hatred ground up not theological concepts, but living human destinies.

5. A blow to reputation

By the early 2000s, his persecutors decided to deliver a crushing blow that would finally destroy Father Georgy not only as a pastor but also as a serious theologian. The target was his academic reputation.

Father Georgy, one of the most prolific and original contemporary Orthodox authors, submitted his doctoral dissertation for defense. The Academic Council of the Moscow Theological Academy (MDA), having assessed the high scientific level of the work, decided to award him the coveted degree of Doctor of Theology (*honoris causa*).

It would have been a triumph. Recognition of his theological contribution by the Church's leading educational institution would have put an end to much speculation about his "unorthodoxy." And that is precisely why his enemies could not allow it to happen. An unprecedented campaign of pressure was launched on the Academy's leadership and the Patriarchate. A flood of denunciations, letters, and publications poured down on those who made the decision.

And the system faltered.

The decision of the Academic Council of the Moscow Theological Academy was overturned. It was an act of public humiliation, a slap in the face delivered before the eyes of the entire Church. Father Georgy was not simply denied recognition — he was declared unworthy, and his many years of theological work were dismissed. The goal was achieved: he was stripped of his academic authority, creating an image not only of a "sectarian," but also of a self-proclaimed, incompetent theologian.

This was followed by a massive media witch hunt. The media loyal to Dvorkin and his circle, primarily Radio Radonezh, were ecstatic, celebrating their victory over the "heretic." Streams of mudslinging, slander, and outright threats poured out on the airwaves.

For Father Georgy and his Brotherhood, these were the darkest of times. They found themselves caught in the crossfire: from church conservatives, from anti-cultists, from a frightened bureaucracy. They were under siege.

Culmination and outcome

Three years later, in 2000, after a thorough investigation by the new Synodal Theological Commission, it became clear that the accusations

against Father Georgy were based on slander and misunderstandings. The ban on his ministry was lifted. Justice seemed to have prevailed.

But it was a victory with a bitter aftertaste. The damage to his reputation caused by years of harassment was enormous. The label of "sect" applied by Dvorkin proved incredibly persistent. The myth created by his propaganda continued to live on, poisoning the atmosphere around the brotherhood for decades to come. Any priest or bishop who wanted to support Kochetkov's ministry now had to think ten times before getting involved with such a "toxic" issue. Dvorkin lost the battle in the synodal commission, but he won the war for public opinion.

The case of Georgy Kochetkov became emblematic. It demonstrated how the "anti-sect" machine, originally aimed at external enemies, could easily be turned against "its own." Against anyone who thinks, searches, and lives outside the box. It was a lesson for the whole Church: don't stick your neck out, be like everyone else, or else the hammer meant for "heretics" will come down on your head too. The fire of the Inquisition, lit by Dvorkin, burned the Church itself.

Witch Hunt: Elena Bressem's Nightmare

The story of Elena Bressem is a medieval witch hunt played out in the setting of modern Russia. Here, Dvorkin's "Machine" moved to the next level of cruelty, using the dirtiest and most reliable accusations.

At first glance, the Bressems, a family from Perm, seemed to be doing well. Alexander Bressem was a well-known entrepreneur who ran four companies. Elena was a stay-at-home mom raising two kids — her son Konstantin and daughter Polina. But behind the facade of prosperity, there was another reality. Alexander, who seemed to be an exemplary husband

and caring father to those around him, turned into a tyrant at home, resolving conflicts with his wife with his fists. Elena endured the abuse for a long time, trying to keep the family together for the sake of the children. But one day her patience ran out, and she decided to leave, taking the children with her.

To gain financial independence, Elena started working in network marketing, becoming an independent partner of Herbalife. In December 2012, she filed for divorce. Her life began to improve: she provided for her children, earned a stable income, and soon met a man from Moscow.

"We got into a serious relationship, and he invited me and the kids to move in with him," Elena says. "Until that moment, my ex-husband had shown no interest in me or the children: he didn't call, didn't communicate with them, and didn't provide any financial support. But when he found out about my move, his behavior changed dramatically. He started threatening me."

In October 2013, Alexander did something that turned Elena's life upside down: he took 12-year-old Konstantin from his school in Moscow and secretly took him to Perm. "My daughter Polina called me from school and said she saw her father taking Konstantin away. I suspected something was wrong and immediately filed a missing child report with the police. However, they refused to open a criminal case. The police explained that the father had the same rights as the mother," Elena shares.

Angered by the fact that his ex-wife had "run away" with the children to another man, Alexander found an unexpected weapon in his fight — the organization RACIRS, headed by Alexander Dvorkin. He hired a lawyer, Alexander Korelov, who, according to Elena, is closely associated with Dvorkin.

At the trial over the children's place of residence, Elena was in for a shock: people she had never seen before spoke out against her. "Suddenly, witnesses appeared in court, whom I had never seen before," Elena says. "My ex-husband brought in as witnesses the deputy head of the Missionary Department of the Perm Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church, Evgeny Oshmarin, and the head of RACIRS, Alexander Dvorkin. They claimed that I was a member of a totalitarian sect."

In support of these statements, an "expert opinion" by Alexei Voat from RACIRS was presented — a document of more than 200 pages declaring Herbalife a sect and its employees "servants of a commercial cult." Voat compared Herbalife representatives to sorcerers and witches, interpreting standard practices for success as magical symbols and brainwashing techniques.

Moreover, according to Oshmarin and Dvorkin, Elena Bressemer was a follower of not one, but two sects. In addition to Herbalife, she was accused of participating in the "Kabbalah movement," which was also classified as a sect and a cult.

Elena listened to these accusations with bewilderment. "I visited the Moscow Kabbalah Center," she explains. "I read books that are popular all over the world. This knowledge is purely practical, providing specific wisdom for everyday life. Only a person with backward thinking and dubious sources of information, stuck in their own limited worldview, can judge negatively what they do not understand."

In his "expert opinion," Alexei Voat claimed that involving children in Kabbalistic philosophy could lead to severe mental disorders requiring inpatient treatment. "If you follow his logic, you could say that studying physics also leads to mental disorders," Elena says indignantly. "After all,

Newton's laws are taught in every school, and Newton himself studied Kabbalah in depth, which has been confirmed by Harvard University. Seriously speaking, I only read age-appropriate children's literature to my children."

Faced with the absurdity of the accusations, Elena began to dig deeper. "I became interested in these people, so I searched the internet to find out who they were and discovered that all of them, including Alexander Korelov, are members of RACIRS. In other words, this whole crowd that is testifying against me in court and proving that I am a sectarian are members of the same organization!"

To check how this system works, Elena decided to conduct an experiment. "I called RACIRS, told them that my husband supposedly works for Amway (I didn't mention Herbalife, but gave another example) — which they also consider a cult — and that he has recently become interested in yoga. I asked them what I should do. They immediately described a rough scenario: I could hire them, they would come, tell me what to do, draw up documents, and testify in court — all for a fee."

Elena came to the conclusion that her case was a well-planned action paid for by her ex-husband.

The situation took on surreal overtones when Alexander and his lawyer decided that they could have Elena declared insane and placed in a psychiatric clinic. An expert opinion was presented to the court, which concluded that Elena was mentally ill.

"Realizing that these people would stop at nothing, I made a request to Moscow, to the Federation of Forensic Expertise, and was informed that the tests conducted did not correspond to the experts' conclusions. I submitted this information to the court, who accepted it. Apparently, they did not

expect me to find the strength and resources to verify all this 'expertise'... And when I presented my evidence, the court invalidated their examination and ordered a new one, which my daughter and I underwent, while he and his son did not show up for the examination because it would have shown that his son did not want to be with him," Elena says.

Meanwhile, Dvorkin gave interviews that distorted reality: "This is my third time in Perm, but now I've come here on private business — to take part in a court case. Consequently, I'm in a working mood. I was invited to appear in court as an expert witness. The case is that a woman who fell under the influence of two sects at once left her husband and disappeared in an unknown direction, taking her two young children with her. The husband had difficulty finding his wife; she had already been married off in the sect, and now he is trying to get his children back through the courts."

"How could this stranger know anything about me? But he was acting as a witness," Elena wonders.

How this story ended and what happened next is unknown.

This case clearly demonstrates how the institution of "cult studies" can be used as a tool of pressure and manipulation for personal and commercial purposes. The well-oiled mechanism of RACIRS allows customers to obtain the necessary "expert opinions" and witness testimony for money, destroying the lives of ordinary people under the guise of fighting cults. The story of Elena Bressem is just one of many examples of how such practices can lead to tragic consequences for families and children.

Elena Bressem's story is a verdict. A verdict on the system of "Dvorkinism," which has reached its final stage of degradation. The ideology of hatred, put on a commercial track, has become a commodity. A service that can be

bought to destroy one's enemy. This story is about business built on human grief.

Dvorkin's most terrible and insidious lie is that he positions himself as a defender of the family. His centers supposedly help relatives "pull" their loved ones out of "sects." In practice, the opposite is true. It is Dvorkin's ideology that, like a virus, penetrates families and destroys them from within, turning the closest people into enemies.

The story of Anna and her mother

Anna, a young woman from St. Petersburg, became interested in yoga and meditation. She found it to be a way to cope with stress and find inner harmony. Her elderly mother, frightened by Dvorkin's television programs and articles she found on the internet, decided that her daughter had fallen into a "destructive cult."

She refused to talk to her daughter. She called the local "anti-cult" center, a branch of RACIRS. There she was given clear instructions: "Your daughter has been brainwashed, talking to her is useless. You need to act decisively." They advised her to gather "compromising information" on her daughter and file a report with the police and child welfare authorities, since Anna had a young son.

What happened next was hell. Her mother, sincerely believing that she was "saving" her daughter and grandson, began to spy on Anna and record her conversations. She wrote reports to all authorities, accusing her daughter of "involving the child in a sect" and "posing a threat to him." Child welfare services came to Anna's home to investigate. She began to be summoned for questioning by the police.

The family was destroyed. Anna was forced to cut off all communication with her mother, who had turned from a loving person into an obsessed persecutor armed with Dvorkin's manuals. Trust, love, family ties — all of this was sacrificed on the altar of the "fight against sects."

Dvorkin's "cult studies" in the service of raiders: The case of the Rozhana center

The technology of branding "sectarians" turned out to be not only an instrument of ideological struggle, but also a profitable commercial product, a service for eliminating competitors. Alexander Dvorkin's "sectology" became a weapon in corporate wars, where millions of dollars, not souls, were at stake. A telling example is the story of the destruction of the Rozhana Center.

When Zhanna Tsaregradskaya, a Muscovite, created the Rozhana Center for Perinatal Education and Breastfeeding Support in 1989, she could not have imagined that her innovative and successful project would be crushed with the label "sect." Originally conceived as a non-profit organization, Rozhana eventually became the most famous organization in Russia in the field of "natural motherhood" and began to generate substantial income. That's when the problems began.

The attack scenario was classic for the "Machine," but the motive was new and purely commercial:

- **Creating an informational background:** In the media and through "independent" activists supported by "cult experts," rumors began to spread that Rozhana was not just a center for expectant mothers, but a dangerous cult.

- **Bringing in an "expert":** To amplify the effect and lend weight to the accusations, the campaign enlisted the help of Alexander Dvorkin, a leading expert on "sects." His participation legitimized the harassment, turning a business conflict into a "struggle for spiritual security."
- **Intervention by law enforcement agencies:** Based on the public outcry created by Dvorkin and his associates, law enforcement agencies initiated criminal cases under several articles of the Russian Criminal Code. Tsaregradskaya herself was taken into custody, and her husband ended up behind bars.

According to Zhanna Tsaregradskaya herself, everything that happened was nothing more than a classic raider takeover of a successful business. She claims that the order was placed by a direct competitor, the large chain of clinics "Mother and Child." It is a striking coincidence that the most vicious attacks on Rozhana coincided with the listing of Mother and Child shares on the stock market, where the company was valued at hundreds of millions of dollars. Eliminating a strong and popular competitor with a unique methodology was a critically important task.

Dvorkin brilliantly did his part. In the eyes of the public, the authorities, and law enforcement, Rozhana went from being a cutting-edge center to a "destructive cult." Accusations of "sectarianism" proved to be the perfect cover for a corporate war, a method that Wall Street business analysts could hardly have imagined.

Tsarevskaya herself, under attack, gave a harsh assessment of her persecutors:

"Please note that... sect experts... suffer from mental disorders. I am referring to Mr. Dvorkin A.L., whose medical history has been published in

the press. Now it is very clear why this idiot imagined sects in home births, breastfeeding, and farms!"

Her desperate rhetorical question sums up this cynical operation:

"What kind of scumbag would sacrifice the health of the nation for personal gain?! Who can answer me?!"

The story of Rozhana revealed a new, ugly side to the "Hate Machine." It turned out that the services of "sect experts" could be bought. Their expertise, media influence, and connections with law enforcement agencies had turned into a well-oiled machine for providing "raider" services. By manipulating the concepts of faith and spirituality, which are sacred to many people, it was possible to elegantly "squeeze out" a business, destroy a competitor, and earn considerable fees from it.

Extremists with the Bible: The Tragedy of Jehovah's Witnesses

If the stories described above are examples of pinpoint strikes, then the campaign against Jehovah's Witnesses is blanket bombing. This is the story of how an entire religious movement, with more than 170,000 followers in Russia, was outlawed and turned into the target of a nationwide hunt. And at the center of this tragedy, as its chief ideologist and catalyst, stood Alexander Dvorkin.

For years, he and his network, RACIRS, methodically created an image of the enemy. Jehovah's Witnesses were the perfect target for them. Their beliefs differ from traditional Orthodox Christianity. Their preaching activities are conspicuous. Their principled refusal to serve in the army and receive blood transfusions is a convenient excuse for accusations of "anti-state" and "misanthropic" activities.

From lecture to lecture, from interview to interview, Dvorkin repeated the same mantras: "brainwashing," "destruction of families," "psychological violence." His "expert opinions" formed the basis of hundreds of administrative and criminal cases across the country. He was laying the groundwork. And in 2017, the state delivered the decisive blow.

On April 20, 2017, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, based on fabricated evidence and biased "expert opinions," recognized the "Administrative Center of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia" and all of its 395 regional branches as "extremist organizations."

From that day on, hell began for tens of thousands of peaceful Russian citizens. The word "extremist," which is associated with terrorists and neo-Nazis, was attached to elderly women handing out brochures and families who simply gathered together to read the Bible.

Stage 1: Labeling. For decades, Dvorkin and his RACIRS had been creating an image of Jehovah's Witnesses as one of the most dangerous "totalitarian sects." In his books and lectures, he accused them of everything: from destroying families to espionage and plotting a coup. It was classic dehumanization. He did not argue with their theology; he denied them the right to be considered human beings.

Stage 2: Media attack. A wave of disinformation was launched through loyal media outlets and their own internet resources. Any domestic conflict in a Jehovah's Witnesses family, any refusal of a blood transfusion on religious grounds, was presented as a sinister crime, as proof of their "destructive" nature. Public opinion was prepared. Fear and hatred were sown.

Stage 3: Pseudo-expertise. When it was decided to strike, a legal basis was needed. And Dvorkin provided it. His "expertise," in which the Bible in the

Jehovah's Witnesses' translation and their literature were declared "extremist materials," formed the basis of the charges. The circle was complete: the chief instigator became the chief judge.

Stages 4 and 5: Repression and sentencing. In April 2017, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, relying on these "expert opinions," recognized Jehovah's Witnesses as an extremist organization and banned their activities throughout the country. The wheel of repression was set in motion.

What followed resembles the darkest pages of history. Raids began throughout Russia. Groups of masked OMON officers with automatic weapons broke into the homes of believers. They were not looking for weapons or bombs. They were looking for Bibles and religious brochures.

The story of the Savelyev family, Surgut

It was a normal morning for a normal family. Valentin Savelyev, a pensioner, and his wife were sleeping peacefully in their apartment. At 6 a.m., there was a loud bang. The door flew off its hinges. People in black uniforms with weapons burst into the apartment. Valentin is thrown face down on the floor. A search begins, lasting several hours. They turn everything upside down, looking for "extremist" literature. They find a Bible.

Later, Valentina and several of his fellow believers are taken to the investigative committee. There, the interrogations begin. But these are not just interrogations. They are torture. People are beaten, suffocated with plastic bags, and shocked with electric prods, all to get them to incriminate themselves and their friends and confess to "extremist activities." That is, to confess that they read the Bible together and prayed to God.

This story is not fiction. It is a documented fact. In February 2019, at least seven Jehovah's Witnesses were subjected to severe torture in Surgut. Their crime? They believed differently from what Dvorkin's "sectology" prescribes.

Voices from behind bars:

- **The story of Dennis Christensen.** A Dane who moved to Orel and married a Russian woman. In May 2017, he was arrested right in the middle of a church service. His "crime" was that he "organized the activities of an extremist organization." He was simply reading the Bible with fellow believers. In February 2019, he was sentenced to six years in prison. A peaceful man, a builder by profession, he was thrown behind bars as a dangerous criminal.
- **The story of the Abdulayev family.** Arsen, his wife Maria, and eight other believers from Kizlyar, Dagestan, were accused of "extremism." Arsen Abdulayev, a father of two, was arrested. During the investigation, according to his lawyers, he was tortured: beaten, strangled, and subjected to electric shocks, demanding confessions and the names of other believers.
- **The story of Valentin Baranovsky.** A 70-year-old pensioner from Surgut. In February 2019, security forces broke into his home, knocked him to the floor, and took him away for questioning, where he was tortured. Despite his age and health condition, he was found guilty of "extremism". Only his age saved him from a real prison term — he received a suspended sentence.

To date, more than 700 Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia have been criminally prosecuted. Dozens are serving real prison terms. But the worst thing is the deaths.

According to human rights activists, at least 12 people have died in prison or shortly after their release due to lack of medical care and harsh conditions of detention. These are people whose only crime was to profess the "wrong" faith. This is blood on the hands of those who have been inciting hatred for years, who have called these people "dangerous extremists," who have been preparing for their destruction.

The machine of hatred does not just destroy careers. It destroys families. It turns neighbors into enemies. It kills. Quietly, methodically, in prison hospitals and behind barbed wire. Twelve deaths are not statistics. They are twelve destroyed worlds. And they are a direct consequence of the ideology of hatred that Alexander Dvorkin has been promoting for years.

Alexander Dvorkin can say as much as he likes that he has nothing to do with the repression. But it is his words, his books, his lies that have become the fuel that drives this conveyor belt of death.

War on world culture: The Bhagavad Gita case

If the campaign against Jehovah's Witnesses was a demonstration of cruelty, then the "Bhagavad Gita case" was a demonstration of absurdity. In **2011**, the Tomsk prosecutor's office demanded that the book called "**The Bhagavad Gita As It Is**" — an annotated translation of one of the most sacred texts of Hinduism — be recognized as extremist material. The basis for this was an "expert opinion" in which any statement about the truth of the path described in the book was regarded as "inciting hatred."

What might have seemed like a local oddity turned into an international scandal:

- The news caused a **parliamentary crisis and mass protests in India.**

- Russian diplomats had to make incredible efforts to extinguish **the diplomatic fire**.
- The Russian Foreign Ministry was forced to justify itself.

In the end, the court dismissed the lawsuit, but the damage to Russia's reputation was enormous.

It is not only large organizations that fall victim to Dvorkin's machine. Anyone can be found on his "blacklists":

- **Pentecostal and evangelical churches:** Their pastors are branded "charismatic frauds" and their congregations "deluded fanatics." This leads to the disruption of worship services, arson attacks on houses of prayer, and attacks on believers.
- **International Society for Krishna Consciousness:** They are accused of "psychological abuse" and "illegal missionary activity." Peaceful marches with chanting mantras are dispersed by the police, and the distribution of sacred texts is equated with extremism.
- **Scientists:** They have become one of Dvorkin's main targets, leading to the closure of their churches in Moscow and St. Petersburg and criminal cases against their leaders.
- **Educational courses and personal growth training:** Any method aimed at self-development can be declared a "commercial cult," which entails inspections, fines, and business closures.

Each such accusation is not just a line in a report. It is a broken business, a ruined reputation, a lost job. It is thousands of people whose lives are poisoned by fear and the stigma of being a "cultist."

In the public sphere, you will hardly find any personal stories of people who would say outright: "Alexander Dvorkin ruined my life." Why? The answer is simple and terrifying.

First, the victims are intimidated. When the full power of the state apparatus is working against you, the last thing you want is to attract even more attention. People are afraid of losing their jobs, afraid for the safety of their children.

Second, the cause-and-effect relationship is deliberately blurred. Dvorkin can always say, "I'm just an expert. The court made the decision." Like a weapons designer, he does not want to be responsible for how his invention is used.

And thirdly, many stories are simply buried under tons of propaganda. The voice of the victim is drowned out by the chorus of accusers.

But the absence of loud statements does not mean there are no victims. They exist. There are hundreds, thousands of them. These are people imprisoned for their beliefs. These are broken families. These are children growing up without fathers. These are people living in exile or in constant fear.

This is the real product of Alexander Dvorkin's activities. This is his bloody harvest. And no references to "church obedience" can wash this blood from his hands. The machine continues to work. The conveyor belt does not stop. And no one knows whose fate will be crushed by its gears tomorrow.

Chapter 4.

Cracks in the Monolith: Scandals, Courts, and Criticism

How did the private initiative of one man, armed with dubious ideas and American experience, become a powerful repressive tool built into the Russian state system? How did Alexander Dvorkin manage to subjugate the police, the prosecutor's office, and the courts, turning them into the driving forces of his "machine"?

Before a person can be judged or prosecuted, they must first be dehumanized in the eyes of society. Dvorkin proved to be a virtuoso of this dark art. His main weapon was the language of dehumanization — poisonous, categorical, appealing not to reason but to the darkest instincts of the crowd.

Key elements of his rhetoric:

- **Labels and dehumanization:** Dvorkin introduced and legitimized terms such as "totalitarian sect," "destructive cult," "brainwashing," and "zombie." These words do not describe, but rather stigmatize, instantly removing the opponent from the realm of human communication. You don't argue with "zombies"; you destroy them or "cure" them by force.
- **Moral panic:** His public speeches and publications were always based on fearmongering. He did not talk about theological differences, but about "ritual violence," "destruction of families,"

"mass suicides," and "espionage." These accusations, usually unsubstantiated, hit the mark — parents' fear for their children and the average person's fear of the unknown.

- **Appeal to authority:** Although "cult studies" is not a recognized academic discipline, and Dvorkin's academic degrees are not confirmed in Russian state registries, he always presented himself as an indisputable expert. The image of a "professor," "doctor of philosophy," and "leading specialist" allowed him to give his personal opinions and fantasies the weight of scientific fact.

This rhetoric was actively broadcast through the media, where Dvorkin became a welcome guest. His activities were accompanied by high-profile scandals, which only reinforced his fame and influence.

Landmark scandals and media battles

Date	Event	Significance and consequences
2007	Lawsuit filed by the Moscow Helsinki Group	Human rights activists filed a lawsuit for defamation after Dvorkin accused them of receiving "salaries from Scientology." The court

		found him guilty and ordered him to issue a retraction on television. This was one of the first cases in which his methods were officially condemned in court, although the decision was later overturned on technical grounds.
2010s	Incident with a TV show participant	One of the participants in a talk show, where Dvorkin appeared as an expert, was detained after

		the broadcast, forcibly sent for examination to the Serbsky Psychiatric Center, and then to Butyrka prison. This case clearly showed that media stigmatization can have direct and rapid repressive consequences.
2023	Article "A 'Sectologist' Through the Eyes of a 'Sectarian'"	A member of Vissarion's community published his personal impressions of Dvorkin's methods, accusing him

		of spreading "tall tales" and "unhealthy, uncultured fantasies" about the life of the community, which the "expert" had never visited. The article exposed Dvorkin's main method: creating an image of the enemy <i>in absentia</i> , without any real research.
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By creating an image of the enemy and an atmosphere of fear in the media, Dvorkin paved the way for the next stage — legal prosecution.

Alexander Dvorkin's main shield, which allowed him to brand, humiliate, and destroy reputations with impunity, was a legal trick. He and his lawyers perfected the thesis that everything he says is not a statement of fact, but his

personal "evaluative judgment," which cannot be verified for accuracy. He did not slander, he "expressed an opinion." Strangely enough, this legal sophistry often found support in Russian courts, turning them from instruments of justice into instruments of reprisal.

Shadow expertise: How pseudoscience becomes a sentence

If media scandals were the preliminary work, then the main weapon of the "Machine" was the so-called "religious studies expertise." In the hands of Dvorkin and his organization RACIRS (Russian Association of Centers for the Study of Religions and Sects), expertise was transformed from an instrument of scientific analysis into a tool of repression.

Dvorkin's works are pseudoscientific, ideological pamphlets steeped in bias... his approach serves not to advance knowledge, but to create an atmosphere of fear, according to professional religious scholars who have commented on his methods.

Critics and lawyers call this activity "shadow expertise," which has turned into a "machine of terror." Its mechanism is simple but effective:

- **Request from the investigation:** Law enforcement agencies, already determined to persecute a particular group, send materials (books, lectures, videos) for "expertise" to centers affiliated with Dvorkin.
- **Text manipulation:** "Experts" arbitrarily take quotes out of context, distort their meaning, and interpret any metaphors or theological statements as "calls for violence," "destruction of the family," or "harm to health."
- **Pseudoscientific conclusion:** Based on these manipulations, a conclusion is written, full of pseudo-scientific terms ("mind

manipulation," "behavior control," "destructive influence"), which asserts that this group or text poses a public danger.

- **Legalization in court:** This conclusion forms the basis of the indictment. For a judge who does not have specialized knowledge in the field of religion, a paper signed by an "expert" and stamped by a "center for the study of religions" looks like compelling evidence.

Alliance with Leviathan: Merging with the state

A private initiative could not have achieved such momentum without a direct alliance with the state apparatus. Dvorkin offered the authorities a convenient tool for combating dissent, and the authorities, in turn, gave him legitimacy, resources, and coercive power. This symbiosis took shape through several key steps.

- **Institutional integration (2009):** Dvorkin became chairman of the **Expert Council for State Religious Studies Expertise at the Russian Ministry of Justice**. This was a decisive step. A private "witch hunter" headed the state body responsible for the fate of all religious organizations in the country. The "machine" was officially integrated into the state apparatus.
- **Operational cooperation (2010-2020s):** Dvorkin's structures established direct interaction with law enforcement agencies.
- **Prosecutor's Office and courts:** RACIRS became the main provider of "expert opinions" at the request of investigative authorities.
- **Ministry of Internal Affairs and FSB:** Dvorkin and his associates began to hold closed lectures and seminars for law enforcement officials. For example, the conference "Totalitarian Sects as a Threat to Russia's National Security" (Novosibirsk, 2020) was organized

specifically for representatives of law enforcement agencies, the Armed Forces, and the Russian Guard. This was direct ideological indoctrination and instruction of law enforcement officers, who were taught to identify "sectarians" and "extremists" according to Dvorkin's criteria.

- **Financial support (2011):** The Iriney of Lyon Center, the core of RACIRS, received a state grant of 2.5 million rubles to "help victims of totalitarian sects." The state began not only to use but also to directly finance the "Hate Machine."

This alliance resulted in a monstrous hybrid: a quasi-state structure that, without formal authority, exerted decisive influence over the police, the prosecutor's office, and the courts. Dvorkin created a system in which he was simultaneously an informer, investigator, expert, prosecutor, and judge all rolled into one. His word, reinforced by the authority of the state, became a verdict. The mechanism was fine-tuned and launched at full capacity.

After delving into the chilling stories of victims, into a world of broken lives and prison sentences for reading the Bible, Alexander Dvorkin's empire may seem like a monolithic, indestructible structure. The machine of hatred, lubricated by state resources and fueled by public fear, seems all-powerful. Anyone who gets caught in its gears is doomed to be crushed.

But that is only one side of the coin. No lie, even the most grandiose and well-organized, can be created without resistance. No monolith built on hatred is without cracks. From the very first day of his "crusade," Dvorkin faced not universal approval, but fierce intellectual, legal, and moral resistance. His war was not a blitzkrieg. It was a protracted battle of position, in which he was opposed not by "cult agents" but by sensible

scientists, principled human rights activists, independent journalists, and even his own fellow church members.

Intellectual rift: Science versus "Sectology"

The first and deepest crack ran through the very foundation of Dvorkin's empire — his claim to scientific credibility. He positioned himself as a "professor," "historian," and "specialist in new religious movements." His main work, the book "Sectology. Totalitarian Sects: An Experience in Systematic Research," was presented as an academic textbook, a revelation for the lost. But for the professional religious studies community, this book was not a revelation, but a shock.

It was not science. It was a pamphlet, a manifesto of hatred, dressed up in a scientific form. Leading Russian religious scholars, one after another, delivered a damning verdict.

"The author is methodologically illiterate... confusion in the author's mind... the book is written at the level of newspaper publications and is completely useless both from the point of view of scientific religious studies and from the point of view of the needs of the Orthodox mission," wrote Doctor of Law, Professor M.N. Kuznetsov in his official conclusion back in 2000.

The criticism was based on several irrefutable points:

- **Lack of methodology.** There is no hint of an objective scientific method in Dvorkin's works. Instead of analysis, there is a collection of horror stories. Instead of research into doctrine, there is a retelling of rumors. Instead of sociological data, there are unsubstantiated claims. Professor Nikolai Trofimchuk, head of the Department of Religious Studies at the Russian Academy of Public Administration, directly accused Dvorkin of lying: "He invents

statistics... accusing various religious associations of crimes without a single fact or criminal case."

- **Confessional bias.** Dvorkin does not investigate, he denounces. His starting point is not the search for truth, but the assertion that Orthodoxy (in his narrow, conservative understanding) is the only truth, and everything else is "heresy" and "satanism." This approach has nothing to do with secular religious studies and is, in essence, a form of religious propaganda.
- **Falsification of facts and outright lies.** Critics caught Dvorkin in blatant falsifications. A classic example is the myth he invented that followers of the Unification Church (Moonies) add human blood to ritual candies. He broadcast this nonsense, worthy of medieval witch trials, as proven fact for years.
- **Aggression towards opponents.** Unable to win in scientific debate, Dvorkin chose a different tactic: to brand any scientist who disagreed with his position as a "bribed ally of totalitarian sects." He turned the scientific field into a battlefield where denunciations and labels were used instead of arguments.

The climax of this intellectual bankruptcy was the scandal surrounding his dismissal from Moscow State University. For years, Dvorkin lectured at the country's leading university, playing on his status as a "professor at St. Tikhon's Orthodox University." However, it turned out that his American PhD in history had never been recognized in Russia. From the point of view of the Russian state certification system, he did not have an academic degree entitling him to teach at such a level. His contract was terminated. This was a crushing blow to his image as a "scholar." The "professor" turned out to be an impostor.

The machine of hatred was built on a pseudoscientific foundation. And that foundation was cracked from the very beginning.

Legal knockout:

While the scientific community saw Dvorkin as an ignorant fanatic, human rights activists saw him as a dangerous criminal whose activities fell squarely under the Criminal Code's article on inciting hatred and enmity. For years, he felt invulnerable, believing that his high-level patronage in the Russian Orthodox Church and law enforcement agencies gave him carte blanche for any slander. He was wrong. Several high-profile court cases showed that his armor was not so strong and that his status as an "expert" did not protect him from liability.

Case No. 1: Moscow Helsinki Group v. The Slanderer (2007-2008)

It was a battle between David and Goliath. On one side was Russia's oldest and most authoritative human rights organization, the Moscow Helsinki Group (MHG), headed by the legendary Lyudmila Alexeyeva. On the other was Alexander Dvorkin.

On live television, Dvorkin made an accusation that was monstrous in its audacity: according to him, the MHG "constantly supports all sects and is on the payroll of Scientology." It was a classic tactic: accuse your opponent of corruption and of working for the "enemy." But this time, he attacked not defenseless believers, but an organization with an impeccable reputation and first-class lawyers.

The MHG filed a lawsuit to protect its honor and dignity. And in 2007, the Khoroshevsky Court of Moscow ruled that Dvorkin's words were slanderous and ordered him to publicly refute them.

It was a sensation. For the first time in Russian history, the country's chief "sectologist" was officially recognized by a court as a slanderer. The monolith had visibly cracked. Dvorkin, in his own words, was shocked, claiming that he had not even received the summons.

Yes, this decision was later overturned by the Moscow City Court on formal procedural grounds (the TV channel was not named as a co-defendant), and the lawsuit was dismissed upon reconsideration. But the first victory had enormous moral significance. It proved that Dvorkin's accusations were not expert opinion, but baseless lies that did not stand up in court. He is not invincible.

Case No. 2: The Yaroslavl Court and the Right to Truth (2006)

The trial in Yaroslavl was even more revealing. Local newspapers published a series of critical articles about Dvorkin, calling him "an odious personality, an instigator of interreligious conflicts" and comparing him to the provocateur Gapon. Dvorkin, offended in his best feelings, filed a lawsuit.

The 2006 ruling of the Kirovsky District Court of Yaroslavl was a legal masterpiece and a real slap in the face for the "sectologist." The court upheld his claim only in part, recognizing only the comparison with Gapon as offensive. But in the rest, the most important part, the court refused, issuing a truly historic ruling. The court ruled that the statements that Dvorkin is a "notorious figure who incites interreligious conflicts," as well as the information about his American citizenship, are not defamatory, as they are true and confirmed by the evidence in the case.

It was a knockout blow. The court essentially officially documented that calling Dvorkin an instigator of discord is not an insult, but a statement of

fact. His reputation is so toxic that it is already impossible to discredit it. This court decision remains one of the most powerful legal arguments in the hands of his critics.

These and other trials exposed Dvorkin's vulnerability. His empire, which seemed like an impregnable fortress, turned out to be a house of cards that could be brought down by a well-crafted lawsuit. It became clear that his power lay not in being right, but in the passivity of his victims and the support of the state apparatus.

Internal Church Schism: "A Stranger Among Friends, a Friend Among Strangers"

Perhaps the most painful blow for Dvorkin was not criticism from outside, but from within — from the Russian Orthodox Church, under whose banner he waged his wars. He positioned himself as the chief defender of Orthodoxy, but many authoritative priests and theologians saw his activities not as protection, but as a threat to the Church.

They understood that replacing Christian love and mission with police surveillance and hatred of dissenters discredited Orthodoxy itself, turning it from a religion of salvation into an ideology of prohibitions.

Dvorkin's public conflict with one of the most popular Orthodox preachers, **Archpriest Andrei Tkachev**, was particularly loud. Dvorkin accused Tkachev of "pseudo-eldership" and other sins, to which he received a harsh and public response. This dispute exposed a deep rift within the Russian Orthodox Church. It became clear that "Dvorkinism" was not the position of the entire Church, but only a marginal, albeit influential, movement.

Critics in cassocks pointed out that Dvorkin's activities were causing enormous damage to the Orthodox mission. Instead of attracting people

with the light of Christ's truth, he was scaring them away with aggression and intolerance. He created an image of the Orthodox activist as an embittered, ignorant, and perpetually enemy-seeking marginal figure. For thousands of people who encountered his "sectarianism," Orthodoxy became associated not with love, but with denunciations and trials.

Thus, the monolith cracked from within. For many of his fellow believers, the "chief defender of the faith" turned out to be a toxic and dangerous figure who was destroying the reputation of the Church.

Putting all these cracks together — intellectual, legal, informational, and internal to the Church — we see a completely different picture. Dvorkin's empire is not an indestructible citadel, but a colossus with feet of clay. Its apparent power is based not on truth or popular support, but exclusively on administrative resources and an atmosphere of fear.

Every lost court case, every scathing academic review, and every voice of protest from within the Church itself is a hammer blow to its clay foundation. The monolith is covered with a network of cracks, and they continue to widen. The resistance was not in vain. It showed that lies can and must be called out.

But even if this colossus collapses one day, it will leave behind scorched earth — poisoned public consciousness, destroyed democratic institutions, and thousands of crippled destinies. In the final chapter, we will assess the scale of this legacy of hatred and understand what awaits Russian society after decades of "Dvorkinism."

Chapter 5.

The Collapse of Democracy

Now that everything has been said and all the evidence is before us, it is time to ask the main question: what remains? What does a person who has devoted his life not to creation but to "sewage work," as he himself calls his activities, leave behind? What will grow on the land he has so diligently "cleansed"?

The answer is frightening in its simplicity. What remains after him are the ruins of democracy and crippled human destinies. Not a blooming garden of faith, not a cleansed field of spirituality, but a desert. A desert where law is replaced by arbitrariness, dialogue by denunciation, mercy by hatred, and freedom by fear. Alexander Dvorkin's legacy is not saved souls, but a poisoned public consciousness and democratic institutions destroyed to the ground.

This is not just a story about one man. It is a story about how easily hatred can don the mask of virtue and become an instrument of state policy. It is an anatomy of the poison that, once it enters the body of society, attacks its most vital organs: law, morality, and the very ability to think.

The main and most destructive legacy of Dvorkin's empire is not even the thousands of ruined lives. It is something more systemic and profound: the erosion of the very foundations of the rule of law. His activities became a catalyst that turned Article 28 of the Russian Constitution, which guarantees everyone freedom of conscience and religion, into a meaningless declaration.

Dvorkin did not simply "advise." He designed and implemented a technology that allowed the law to be circumvented by means of the law itself. His pseudoscientific discipline, "sectology," became an unofficial but mandatory commentary on the most repressive articles of Russian legislation.

For three decades, the machine of hatred worked at full capacity. What is the result? What legacy do Alexander Dvorkin and his sect of "sect fighters" leave behind? This legacy is scorched earth.

1. Destruction of the legal field. Dvorkin's main crime is not that he insulted someone. He destroyed the very principle of law. He turned "expertise" from an instrument of knowledge into an instrument of repression. He taught the courts and investigators to take ideological denunciations wrapped in pseudo-scientific packaging at face value. He created a precedent whereby the "opinion" of one person, even if it is false and biased, becomes more important than facts and the law. After him, it became possible in Russia to sentence a person to a real prison term for reading the Bible or participating in a training course on healthy eating.

2. The revival of a culture of denunciation. Dvorkin's machine ran on denunciations. He revived and legitimized the most repulsive practice of setting people against each other. He taught parents to write statements about their children, neighbors about their neighbors, and colleagues about their colleagues. He poisoned society with suspicion and fear, creating an atmosphere in which anyone could become a victim of slander.

3. The destruction of thousands of lives. Behind the abstract terms lie real tragedies. These are not statistics. These are Anatoly Garmaev, Georgy Kochetkov, Elena Bressemer, twelve Jehovah's Witnesses who died in prison

for their faith, thousands of destroyed families, broken careers, crippled souls. This is the graveyard on which Dvorkin built his pedestal.

4. Spiritual desert. Acting under the banner of defending Orthodoxy, Dvorkin has done it enormous damage. He has replaced the Gospel message of love, forgiveness, and dialogue with an ideology of hatred, intolerance, and war. He has taught people to see those of other faiths not as images of God, but as enemies who must be destroyed. Instead of sowing faith, he sowed fear. Instead of building bridges, he dug trenches. He turned part of the Church into an appendage of a repressive state and faith into an instrument of political struggle.

5. Service to totalitarianism. Ultimately, the main beneficiary of Dvorkin's activities was not society or the Church, but the authoritarian state. His technology of "fighting sects" proved to be a universal weapon for suppressing any dissent. Today, religious minorities are declared "sectarians"; tomorrow, it will be human rights activists; the day after tomorrow, environmentalists, scientists, or simply those who disagree with the government's policies. Dvorkin created and refined a mechanism that allows the state to destroy anyone it dislikes under a plausible pretext.

Dvorkin's influence on public consciousness proved to be no less destructive. He did something terrible: he legalized hate speech and made it the norm.

Before his appearance, disputes about religion, even the most heated ones, were conducted on a different level. After him, poisonous, pseudoscientific terms entered the Russian lexicon and became firmly entrenched, serving as markers for dehumanization:

- **"Totalitarian sect"**

- **"Destructive cult"**
- **"Zombification"**
- **"Mind control"**

These labels, which have no strict scientific definition, became a powerful weapon. They eliminated the need to think, analyze, or understand. Why bother to understand the complex theology of the Krishnas or the social practices of Scientologists when you can just slap on the label "sect" and end the conversation?

These words spread like a virus from his books and lectures to newspaper headlines, reports on federal television channels, police reports, and speeches by officials. They poisoned the very air that society breathes. They created an atmosphere of total suspicion, in which anyone who was "different" — not like everyone else — automatically became a potential "cult member" and, therefore, an enemy.

As a result, a deep rift has formed in society. Parents have come to see their own children who are interested in yoga as enemies. Neighbors have begun to report on those who gather to study the Bible. Any group united by common interests — from personal growth courses to environmental initiatives — has found itself under threat.

This is the real "poisoning of public consciousness." It is the creation of a world where fear and hatred of those who are different become social virtues. Dvorkin taught society not just to fear, but to hate. And this lesson was learned all too well. It will take years to restore an atmosphere of trust and tolerance and to cleanse language of this poison.

The height of cynicism: the "foreign agent" paradox

And perhaps the most malicious and ironic touch to the portrait of the architect of hatred is his own status. All his activities were based on fighting the "corrupting influence of the West" and "foreign emissaries" who were allegedly trying to destroy Russia's spiritual foundations. He positioned himself as the chief guardian of national sovereignty in the religious sphere.

Now let's take another look at the facts, calmly and point by point:

- **Citizenship:** Alexander Dvorkin is a citizen of the United States of America. This fact has been confirmed by the court and has never been seriously disputed by him.
- **Education and ideology:** He received all of his education, from bachelor's to doctoral degrees, in the United States. His methods of combating "cults" are directly imported from the American anti-cult movement of the 1980s, in particular, the criminal organization Cult Awareness Network (CAN). His ideological roots, as we have seen, go back to Nazi Germany through his Danish teacher Johannes Aagaard.
- **Organizational affiliation:** For many years, he was vice president of FECRIS, a European federation based in France and funded by the French government, which the Russian authorities consider "unfriendly."

What unfolds before us is a picture of extreme cynicism. A man who is a product of the Western world, from his passport to his working methods, has become Russia's chief hunter of "foreign agents." A US citizen who imported the darkest American technologies of personality suppression into Russia branded others for the slightest connection with foreign countries. The vice president of an organization funded by "unfriendly" France accused others of working for foreign intelligence services.

This paradox exposes all the lies underlying his empire. The fight against "sects" has never been a fight for the purity of Orthodoxy or for Russia's sovereignty. It was and is a technology of power. A technology for creating and destroying "enemies" that can be put at the service of anyone. And the fact that the main operator of this technology in Russia is a man with an American passport only underscores its universal and utterly cynical nature. This is not about faith. It is about power.

Reflections on the ruins

The story of Alexander Dvorkin makes us think about things deeper than just politics and law. It confronts us with eternal philosophical questions about the nature of evil and how easily people find justification for the most monstrous cruelty.

The most frightening aspect of the "Dvorkinism" phenomenon is that it is evil that considers itself good. It is hatred masquerading as love and protection. "We destroy their lives to save their souls." "We put them in prison to protect our children." This logic allowed the Inquisitors to burn heretics, the Nazis to build concentration camps, and Dvorkin to smile and call his activities "sanitation work."

He does not consider himself a creator of hatred. He sees himself as a sanitation worker saving society from contagion.

This story teaches us the main thing: the most dangerous evil is evil armed with ideology. Hatred becomes an all-consuming force precisely when it finds a "noble" justification for itself — whether it be the protection of faith, nation, traditional values, or spiritual security. And it is the duty of every thinking person to learn to tear off these masks. To learn to see behind the pompous speeches about "protection" — the banal desire to destroy,

behind the calls for "unity" — the desire for total control, and behind the image of the "witch hunter" — a frightened person who can only establish himself in this world by finding and destroying enemies.

Dvorkin's legacy is not just ruins. It is a functioning factory for the production of ruins. And it will continue to operate as long as there is a demand for hatred in society.

This book ends not with a verdict, but with a question addressed to each reader. The story of Alexander Dvorkin is a mirror. Looking into it, we see not only his distorted face, but also the reflection of our own society. A society that allowed this to happen. A society that applauded the "hunter" without noticing how it was turning into his prey.

What will we do with this scorched earth? Will we let it be overgrown with thistles of hatred and fear? Or will we find the strength and courage to start cultivating it again? To rake through the ashes of ruined lives and uproot the poisonous weeds of lies, to try to plant seeds of sanity, tolerance, and respect for human dignity in this soil.

This work is much more difficult than "sewage disposal." It requires not hatred, but love. Not fanaticism, but wisdom. Not a desire to destroy, but the courage to create. And we must begin this work with ourselves. By once and for all rejecting the temptation of simple answers and the sweet poison of sanctioned hatred. By not rushing to "expertise" and judgment when confronted with another person's mystery, but trying to unravel it.

For only in this way can we remain human.

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